

Why Should I Look at Revolutionary War Pension Records?

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Following the Revolutionary War, state governments and the federal government created pension laws to help those returning from the war. These pension laws evolved for almost a century, initially offering limited compensation to a select few, then expanding the criteria so more people could apply before restricting applications and finally relaxing the laws once again. Knowing which law was in effect at the time of the pension application can reveal more details.

Many people were denied a pension when filing under a specific act, but when the law changed, a new application might be accepted. This repeated application process can provide many facts and details because of the required affidavits from military companions and neighbors, proof of marriage or parentage, and residency requirements.

The final status of an application is indicated by an alpha code preceding the pension file number. The status of a pension could be Survivor (S), Widow (W), or Rejected (R). Though a pension could have been accepted and initially filed as a Survivor's Pension (S), if later the widow applied under the survivor's name and was accepted, the final status would be changed to a Widow's Pension (W). Or if her claim could not be proven, then the final status would have altered to a Rejected Pension (R).

Pension Laws

To learn more about the pension laws and the requirements:

- *Revolutionary War Pensions* Collection Description
<<https://www.fold3.com/title/467/revolutionary-war-pensions/description>>
- *National Archives Records Administration (NARA) Descriptive Pamphlet M804: Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant Application Files*
<<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/microfilm/m804.pdf>>

Why Pension Files

With the varying degrees of documentation required by the pension acts, the information found within the files can be limited or substantial.

Pension files can have:

- Various spellings of a name or a name change.
- Documentation of family relationships between spouses, parents, children, siblings, and in-laws. Birth, marriage, and death for these individuals can be found in these affidavits and documents.
- Papers proving a marriage can lead to church documents.

- Affidavits from friends, neighbors, and military compatriots can provide a fuller picture of the person's life and military service.
- Inventories of property indicate a need to search other property or court-related documents.
- Proof of migration through multiple enrollments in service showing a change in residence.
- If a pension recipient moved to a new location, he/she would have to be removed from the local pension roll and transferred to the pension office in the new locality, hence documenting migration.

Sources to Search

- Books
 - United States Dept. of the Interior. *Rejected or Suspended Applications for Revolutionary War Pensions, with an Added Index to States*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1969.
 - United States Pension Bureau. *Pensioners of Revolutionary War Struck Off the Roll: With an Added Index to States*. Baltimore, MD: reprinted for Clearfield Co. by Genealogical Pub. Co., 1998.
 - United States War Dept. *The Pension Roll of 1835*. Baltimore, MD: Genealogical Pub. Co., 1968.
 - White, Virgil D. *Genealogical Abstracts of Revolutionary War Pension Files*. Waynesboro, TN: National Historical Pub. Co., 1990-1992.
- Ancestry <<https://www.ancestry.com/>>
 - U.S., *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, 1800-1900* collection
 - Digitized images from NARA film M-804 indexed by pensioner only.
- FamilySearch <<https://www.familysearch.org/>>
 - *United States Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Applications, 1800-1900* collection
 - Digitized images from NARA film M-804 with index of every name mentioned in the file.
 - Index is free on FamilySearch and links to the images on Fold3 <<https://www.fold3.com/>> which requires a subscription.
- FindMyPast <<https://www.findmypast.com/>>
 - *United States, Revolutionary War, Pensions* collection
 - Digitized images indexed by pensioner only.
- Fold3 <<https://www.fold3.com/>>
 - *Revolutionary War Pensions* collection
 - Digitized images from NARA film M-804 with index of every name mentioned in the file.
- MyHeritage <<https://www.myheritage.com/>>
 - *Revolutionary War Pension Records* collection
 - Abstract of records indexed by pensioner only.